



Church of the Brethren

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

“Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:9 (NIV)

In 2021, Brethren Disaster Ministries (BDM) weathered an unusual combination of the COVID-19 pandemic, the volcano eruption in DR Congo, and the Haiti earthquake responses, along with a major Afghan resettlement effort and the typical responses to hurricanes and tornados. Throughout yet another challenging year for disaster ministries, volunteers and staff refused to be discouraged and moved forward with courage to bring hope, healing, and God’s love to those impacted by disasters.

The challenges have continued in 2022 with the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the resulting humanitarian and refugee crisis. The Church of the Brethren is providing significant assistance to people impacted by the war, both in Ukraine and in the surrounding countries hosting refugees (especially Poland, Romania and Moldova), through partnerships with Church World Service CWS), International Orthodox Christian Charities, and others. Assistance is focused on the most vulnerable people who are not being served by the larger relief agencies.

Special Emergency Disaster Fund (EDF) funding in 2021 included COVID-19 pandemic grants to two US congregations, as well as global grants to Brethren in Venezuela, Nigeria, and Mexico and to partners IMA World Health (for India) and CWS. A grant to CWS supported a special resettlement program for Afghans evacuated during August’s historic airlift.

BDM’s domestic programs continued to navigate the complexities of serving disaster survivors in the midst of the pandemic, bolstered by flexible volunteers who were willing and able to serve under challenging conditions. COVID-19 protocols remained in place, with a focus on caring for housing hosts, partners, survivors of all ages, and volunteers.

To accommodate pandemic protocols and fewer numbers of volunteers, BDM’s Rebuilding Program maintained only one open project site at a time. The Coastal NC site in Bayboro, N.C., continued to assist Hurricane Florence (2018) survivors through April 2021. From May to September 2021, volunteers returned to Dayton, Ohio, to repair and rebuild homes damaged in the 2019 Memorial Day tornados. Through an innovative partnership program, BDM also worked on homes intended for purchase by renters displaced due to the tornados. The Bayboro project reopened in October, more than two years after Hurricane Florence, and continued to serve survivors there until mid-April 2022. After closing the North Carolina project, a new Rebuilding project opened in Waverly, Tenn., in response to a destructive and deadly August 2021 flash flooding event. The Waverly project and short-term projects in Kentucky, responding to winter 2021 tornados, will continue.

In 2021, BDM supported the Northern Plains district’s efforts to repair homes damaged in the August 2020 Derecho and sponsored a short-term two-week response to repair homes damaged in the Spring 2019 flooding near Omaha, Neb. By the end of the year, 829 Rebuilding Program volunteers had served 53 families in four states.

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After a year with no volunteer deployments, Children's Disaster Services (CDS) was able to serve a one-year record total of 13,728 children in 2021. A large focus centered around the refugee and migrant crises at the southern US border and with the historic Afghanistan evacuation. A Critical Response Childcare (CRC) team responded to the Surfside, Fla., building collapse in June. Natural disasters warranted the deployment of additional CDS teams, with the major response being to Hurricane Ida in Louisiana in August and September. Overall, CDS deployed 75 volunteers for 134 days in 2021.

The Church of the Brethren continued to support mission points, Global Brethren churches, and partners through EDF grants. The Nigeria Crisis Response (NCR), in collaboration with EYN (Church of the Brethren in Nigeria) and Mission 21, remains the largest global program. Even amidst ongoing, and often increasing, violence and insecurity, NCR maintains its focus on sponsorship of four camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs), food distributions, medical assistance, livelihood training centers for widows and orphans, seeds and fertilizer, new wells for drinking water, education assistance for orphan children, trauma workshops, training of one-on-one counselors, and home repairs for the most vulnerable.

The August 2021 earthquake in Haiti led to support for the L'Eglise des Freres d'Haiti (the Haiti Church of the Brethren) relief and rebuilding program in Saut Mathurine, where a previous joint Hurricane Matthew (2016) response project had resulted in the building of homes (which survived the earthquake) and an active and growing Brethren congregation. BDM is also supporting a CWS response to the earthquake in a neighboring impacted community.

Another major effort is the ongoing funding for Hurricanes Eta and Iota recovery in Honduras through Proyecto Aldea Global (Project Global Village) and CWS. Additional EDF grants supported relief and recovery through sister churches in DR Congo and Rwanda (Mt. Nyiragongo volcano eruption), the South Sudan Church of the Brethren mission, and partners in Burundi, Ecuador, Indonesia, Lebanon, Myanmar, Timor-Leste, and Yemen.

The 2021 BDM programmatic expenses were \$1,451,818. This includes expenses from EDF allocations that support specific programs such as \$217,810 for US responses (Rebuilding, CDS, etc.); \$146,460 for the Nigeria Crisis Response; \$427,226 for all other global responses; and \$84,800 for the domestic and global COVID-19 Pandemic Grant programs.

We are called to love God and to step out boldly in faith to serve our neighbors. The staff and volunteers of Brethren Disaster Ministries are truly grateful to each of you for both supporting and working alongside us to answer that call as "co-workers in God's service" (1 Corinth. 3:9).

We ask for your continued prayers and support as we serve survivors of both natural and human-caused disasters on their journey of recovery.



Roy Winter, Executive Director for Service Ministries

On behalf of BDM staff: Lisa Crouch, Jenn Dorsch-Messler, Sharon Franzén, and Kim Gingerich

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